



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School

PROVIDENCE

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 30, 2004



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

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<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT .....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>USING THE REPORT .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>2. PROFILE OF ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. PORTRAIT OF ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR _PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<b>7. FINAL ADVICE TO ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>REPORT APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<b>THE ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>24</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Purpose and Limits of This Report**

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School from April 26-30, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

**The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 120 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 37 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report

- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit

- Set in the present, and

- Contains the judgment of the team

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Providence School District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Providence School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## 2. PROFILE OF ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located in the Elmwood section of Providence, Rhode Island, Alfred Lima School is one of two schools in the Leviton Complex. The building originally was a factory for the Leviton Corporation, which sat vacant for many years. After extensive renovations it opened in 1997 as two schools: the Alfred Lima School and the Charles Fortes Academy. An annex was built in 2001 to meet the state fire and safety board regulations.

Alfred Lima Elementary School is the only dual language school in Providence. The curriculum focuses on developing proficiency and literacy in English and Spanish, allowing students to learn the curriculum in both their dominant and second languages.

This school serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Of the 658 students, 80.6% are Latino, 13.8% are African-American, 2.6% are white and 2.2% are Asian. Eighty-nine percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and many come from single-parent homes. Seventy-six percent of the students live within walking distance of the school. In the district's accountability system, Lima is identified as an "extreme priority" school.

A principal, an assistant principal and 42 full-time faculty members service the school. The faculty includes 20 bilingual teachers, as well as three special education teachers, a literacy coach, two math coaches and a dual language coach. There are 11 full-time and part-time itinerants, three special education teachers, six specialists and 10 support staff. Faculty turnover is a critical issue for Lima. A shortage of bi-lingual teachers creates vacancies that are not filled during the Job Fair; these positions are filled by new, inexperienced teachers, who are frequently laid off at the end of the school year.

Lima has adopted several programs to target literacy and to develop stronger ties between home and school. *The Success for All* reading curriculum is a highly structured, scripted program that addresses both reading mechanics and analysis. It is taught in English and Spanish to develop literacy in the dominant language of the students. Extensive family support services, including medical, mental and dental health clinics, are special features of this program. Lima is one of eight Providence elementary schools to receive a Reading First grant for students in kindergarten through grade three and one of three Providence schools participating in the Toyota Family Literacy Grant, which provides ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and guidance to parents about how to help their children work on their school work at home.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Alfred Lima Elementary School is truly unique. As described by a Lima student, “It’s not like anything anyone could imagine!” Housed in two separate buildings, the main building is the remodeled Leviton factory, where classes are held for students in the second through sixth grades. A second building, the Leviton Annex, is one block away and houses students in kindergarten through first grade. Both buildings are well maintained and offer bright, cheerful, spacious classrooms conducive to learning and teaching. Classes are filled with respectful students who learn in two languages from many teachers.

Lima offers a dual language education to its largely Hispanic population. Parents are strongly committed to the school and its goals; they hope the school will build their children’s awareness of their membership in a global community and, at the same time, keep their cultural connections alive. The hard-working administrators and staff are dedicated to their students and passionate about their school.

The Lima community presently is in a state of turmoil because of divisions within the faculty, within the administrative staff, between the principal and the staff, and between faculty and parents. These divisions are compounded by the complexities of the dual language program and the high teacher turnover each year. An atmosphere of distrust permeates the school. Teachers do not feel respected or supported in their efforts to provide a nurturing, enriched learning environment for students. The principal is focused on securing support for the dual language model, rather than on working with her staff to determine what in the current curriculum is working, what is not working and what needs to be changed to best meet the needs of all Lima students. The needs of the children are lost among these adult problems, and the children are paying the price.

The entire school community faces many challenges. The complexity of the dual language program, combined with the requirements for *Success For All*, *Math Investigations* and other district mandates, places significant demands on the teachers, students and administrators. Morale is low; communication at all levels is poor; and leadership is lacking. District and school administrators, as well as staff, await the results of an outside study to determine the future direction of Alfred Lima School.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students at Alfred Lima School like to write and are beginning to incorporate the elements of effective writing into their work. While their test scores are low, the number who met the standard in writing effectiveness on the 2003 New Standards Reference Examination increased by 16%. Students, who follow the routines that support the writing process and who clearly understand the elements of quality writing, write well. Their writing shows supporting details, good descriptions, voice and organization. Lima students know how to write in both Spanish and English using a variety of forms, including journals, narratives, diaries, and poetry, as well as persuasive and report writing. The demand of writing in two languages increases the complexities of learning to write effectively. It is important to note that when asked about their language of preference, at least half of the Spanish language learners and English language learners say they prefer to write in Spanish, and an equal number of members of both groups say they prefer to write in English. These findings are puzzling. Nevertheless, too few students communicate effectively through writing. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, school and district report cards, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Students report that they enjoy math and that they know how to solve problems in many different ways. Nevertheless, a limited number of students solve problems well. On the 2003 New Standards Reference Examination 97% of the students did not achieve the standard in problem solving, and 91% did not achieve the standard in math concepts. While many students use pictures, charts, graphs and manipulatives to solve problems, they do not understand the underlying concepts or know how to make connections among mathematical ideas. Students sometimes share their solutions with their peers and describe the steps they have used to solve problems, but they rarely mathematically justify their solutions. Students often review their skills rather than extend their knowledge to more challenging problems. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, classroom textbooks)*

Although 73% of Lima students are reading below the standard in analysis and interpretation on the 2003 New Standards Reference Examination, many are fluent readers at their *Success For All* levels. Students say they enjoy reading and often read to partners in English and in Spanish. Students pronounce and define words and write sentences to develop their reading vocabulary, but they do not fully understand the meaning of many words. They listen intently to read alouds and know how to predict, infer and draw conclusions. But, when they independently read texts, few can apply these skills. Students readily answer comprehension questions about literature that is read to them, but they struggle to answer questions about what they read independently. Students have few opportunities to choose books to read for their own enjoyment during the school day. Many do not read books for pleasure on their own. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, meeting with parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, discussing student work with teachers, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Students at Alfred Lima School are well-behaved, respectful learners. They say they feel safe at school, and they attend school regularly. Students are comfortable changing classes for reading instruction, and they know how to use routines to guide their learning. While some eagerly help and support one another's learning, many, who are in classes that are teacher-centered, are content to be passive learners. Students at all grade levels are learning to be bilingual, biliterate learners who appreciate cultural diversity. Some find it challenging; others find it rewarding. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, observing the school outside the classroom, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

- ◆ *Students are respectful, flexible learners who strive to meet the challenges created by switching teachers and the language of instruction*
- ◆ *Students have difficulty communicating their ideas in writing in both English and Spanish.*
- ◆ *Students are not sufficiently challenged to deepen their understanding in all areas of the curriculum.*
- ◆ *Struggling learners are not supported in reading and math.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Teachers at Alfred Lima School teach reading for 90 consecutive minutes each day using the *Success For All (SFA)* reading program, a research-based, highly structured, sequenced and scripted program. Because this is a dual language school, reading instruction is in the dominant language of students in kindergarten through first grade. Teachers also instruct *SFA* in Spanish in three bilingual classes that include transition into English students as well as special education students, one section of grade two and two sections of grade six. All other *SFA* classes in grades two through six are taught in English. Teachers in all classrooms read aloud to students, ask questions and model what proficient readers do to understand text. However, teachers spend too much time developing specific vocabulary at the expense of independent reading time, and there is little evidence that students use this vocabulary in their oral or written work. Teachers teach reading to homogeneous groups and monitor student progress weekly. Every eight weeks students are regrouped according to their assessment results, and teachers instruct a new group of students at a new level of instruction. While these practices could be effective, teachers adhere to the scripted routine—teaching to the whole group, rather than supporting individual student’s needs. Consequently, struggling learners lack additional support, and more advanced learners are not challenged. Too many students are not reading at grade level in either Spanish or English. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, teacher assistants and students, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school policies and practices)*

Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade teach math primarily using the *Investigations* math program, in its second year of implementation at Lima. Sixth grade teachers use *Connected Math*. While two math coaches provide professional development, teachers report the need for more. In classrooms where teachers encourage student exploration of mathematical concepts, students are becoming confident problem solvers. However, in classrooms where instruction is teacher-centered, students wait passively for teachers to show them how to solve the problems. Not all teachers consistently use *Investigations*, and some replace or supplement this program with other materials. This inconsistency prevents students from building math connections. Teachers report that students are not prepared when they make the quarterly switch from one teacher to another. The language of instruction changes as well, compounding the problem. Those teachers, who believe students must master basic skills first, rarely provide opportunities for students to use their math sense to solve problems. Few teachers effectively utilize student solutions to help students build upon one another’s knowledge. *(following students, observing classes, talking with teachers and students, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks)*

Teachers teach writing in Spanish and English in all content areas. Many show students how to use writing as a communication tool, as well as a way to build connections and strengthen their understanding. Students enjoy writing in classrooms where teachers follow the structure and organization of *Writer's Workshop*, and the quality of their writing is improving. These teachers use innovative ways to keep the writing process moving. Charts on the walls, word walls, file boxes, criteria charts and rubrics support student writing and keep students organized. These teachers frequently confer with their students and provide them with specific feedback to help them improve. While these effective practices are occurring in many classrooms, *Writer's Workshop* is new; it is not consistently implemented throughout the school. The academic rigor missing in some classrooms prevents students from including the elements of quality writing to communicate effectively. Since teacher collaboration is poor and students receive instruction from different teachers for *Writer's Workshop* and *SFA* reading, teachers find it difficult to connect reading and writing assignments. Teachers at Alfred Lima indicate that they have received less professional development than other Providence teachers in *Writer's Workshop*, and they request more. (following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with school improvement team and district administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, reviewing district and school policies and practices)

Teachers at Alfred Lima School are talented and passionate. Many are bilingual. They are committed to meeting the needs of their students. However, they report frustration regarding the lack of support they receive from school and district leaders to meet the demands of the multiple programs and district mandates. The dual language program, *SFA*, *Investigations* and *Writer's Workshop* require consistent and coordinated instruction. Yet, despite the availability of weekly grade level common planning and mutual planning time, collaboration and coordination does not occur at all grade levels. Teachers admit the need to target and support struggling students, but the frequent changes in instruction groupings, as well as the poor communication among teachers, inhibit this process. Distrust among teachers and the existence of teacher factions undermine the efforts of teachers to improve instruction practices and student achievement effectively. Teachers report that many are unable to separate their problems with the school administration from the challenges of their instruction. As a result, many teachers often work in isolation and rarely rely on the talents of their colleagues to improve their practice. (following students, observing classes, talking with teachers, meeting with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, 2000 SALT Survey report, reviewing records of professional development activities)

**Commendations for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School**

Bilingual, bicultural role models

Pockets of excellent teaching at each grade level

Hard-working, passionate teachers

**Recommendations for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School**

Set clear, high expectations for all students. Create student-centered lessons that challenge students to think critically. Provide more opportunities for students to become independent, self-directed learners.

Coordinate instruction to provide more consistency both within and between grade levels. Use common planning and mutual planning times to share successful practices and strategies. Utilize the expertise of your colleagues.

Work with coaches to identify struggling learners across the curriculum, and provide targeted support for them.

Increase student writing across the curriculum.

Promote reading for enjoyment by expanding classroom libraries. Encourage students to use the school library. Increase the amount of time students spend in independent reading.

Seek ways to strengthen collegial relationships. Promote open communication among teachers and staff. Participate in team-building activities.

Reflect on teaching practices. Participate in professional development both inside and outside the district to learn about practices that address learning gaps. Take responsibility for your own professional growth.

**Commendations for the Providence School District**

Scope and Sequence documents at every grade level to guide instruction.

**Recommendations for Providence School Department**

Continue to provide support and professional development for teachers and coaches in reading, writing, math and dual languages. Individualize professional development to meet the unique needs of students at Alfred Lima School.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

The principal and assistant principal face unique challenges as they oversee the operation of a large urban school housed in two buildings that is committed to a dual language program. The principal, who has led this school since it opened in 1997, is passionate about her vision that Alfred Lima School become a beacon for dual language learning. She believes that the dual language program allows students to develop a strong sense of who they are. This strikes a responsive chord among parents who advocate for the school. She fights to seek funding and support for this model from the district, outside agencies and institutions of higher learning; and she has been successful in her efforts. However, this single-minded focus divides the faculty and impedes the principal's ability to attend to essential issues that affect learning and teaching. Ineffective communication between administrators and among the administrators and the faculty leads to confusion, isolation, frustration and misconceptions. The assistant principal is underutilized. Teachers report that low teacher morale permeates the building. *(meeting with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, following students, observing classes, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing school improvement plan)*

As stated in the program brochure for parents, the goals of the dual language program at Alfred Lima School are to help all students reach high academic levels, become bilingual and develop an appreciation for other cultures. While these goals are admirable, the present model of implementation is not effective. In this 50/50 model, students spend fifty percent of the day in their second language in kindergarten through grade two.. Beginning in grade three, content instruction is divided into eight weeks of Spanish and eight weeks of English. Students report that, just when they begin to "catch on" to the content in one language, it is time to change to the other language. They say they need more help, because they often do not understand. As a result, students often do not grasp important content knowledge, which creates gaps in their learning. Additionally, the high teacher turnover limits the opportunities teachers have to develop strong teacher partnerships with one another, and it prevents teachers from gaining the expertise they need to implement the dual language model, *SFA* and *Investigations* effectively. Strong parent advocates, faculty and the district want an assessment of the program to determine its effectiveness. A forthcoming evaluation by an outside agency will inform and define reform efforts to improve student achievement. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, 2003 Information Works!, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

While the present schedule provides time for weekly common planning, as well as for an uninterrupted literacy block, it restricts instruction in the arts. Many students do not have music, art or library on a weekly basis. Some students attend art classes three times per week, while others attend none. Several grades often are combined in one physical education class, limiting age-appropriate activities. The reduced library schedule prevents the fullest possible use of this valuable resource to support students in their literacy development in both languages. As a result, the current schedule reduces opportunities for students to explore and develop essential creative skills and interests that are necessary to improve their learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Parents are one of Lima's greatest assets. The principal reports that approximately three hundred adults and children participated in the "First Day" celebration this year. Many are strong advocates of the dual language program, as well as of their children's education. Many parents say they want to learn the necessary skills to support their children's learning and are anxious to be included in the learning community. They assist with kindergarten registration, attend Literacy and Math nights and study English as a Second Language (ESL). A parent coordinator from Dorcas Place organizes parent volunteers and oversees the implementation of The Toyota Family Literacy Grant that provides ESL instruction to Lima families. Administrators, teachers and the SALT team agree that parent involvement is key to the successful implementation of the dual language and *Success For All* programs. *(meeting with school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with parents, reviewing school policies and practices, reviewing school improvement plan)*

As written, the school improvement plan does not include essential components to move the school forward in teaching and learning. The action steps do not clearly describe changes in instruction to reach the stated targets. Moreover, many action steps that would assure accountability are not routinely implemented, such as frequent directed learning walks with written follow up letters. Guidelines for periodic monitoring are not specific enough to determine whether students are developing the proficiencies identified to improve their learning. While coaches, teachers and the assistant administrator wrote the plan, few teachers are familiar with its contents. The plan was neither distributed nor discussed, which resulted in little or no buy-in by the faculty. Consequently, the Lima's ProvidenceOnePlan does not guide instruction, and it is not an effective tool for change. *(meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, meeting with school improvement team and students)*

**Commendations for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School**

Strong parent involvement

Commitment to a dual language program

Weekly common planning time for grade level meetings

**Recommendations for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School**

Establish open channels of communication among teachers, among teachers and administrators, between school buildings and between administrators.

Develop a school culture in which everyone's opinion is valued and respected. Create opportunities for team building and collaboration. Share your talents and expertise with your colleagues. Develop shared leadership and trust.

Use this report to revise the action steps in Lima's ProvidenceOne Plan (POP) to describe clearly the desired changes in student learning behaviors and teaching practices. Use the POP to guide and monitor instruction. Ensure that it is available to all stakeholders.

Create ways to orient new teachers into the Lima community.

Provide comprehensive support to assist struggling learners. Implement ramp-up programs that address learning gaps.

Have confidence in the forthcoming independent evaluation. Participate and give honest feedback. Use the recommendations to form a common vision that will move Lima forward.

**Recommendations for \_Providence School Department**

Support and assist the implementation of the independent evaluation.

Provide a mentor, and support the development of shared leadership skills.

Provide additional support and mentors for new teachers, as well as for teachers with emergency certification. Provide the necessary professional development to help teachers implement specific programs in the school.



## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

The SALT team recognizes and acknowledges the challenges, frustrations and uniqueness of Alfred Lima School. You have overcome many hurdles to arrive at this point. Now you are at a crossroads. Use this report and the upcoming outside evaluation to make some hard decisions.

It is time to set aside your personal agendas, to be open to different perspectives and to focus on the needs of your students. Your students are lost in the midst of the adult problems both within and outside of the school. A focus on consistency, differentiated instruction and increased rigor will help them improve.

Now is the time to address the overriding issues of leadership and communication. Let all voices be heard. Establish a truly representative school improvement team that will coordinate initiatives, provide direction and communicate regularly with all stakeholders.

Indeed, if the school community as a whole can come together, unified by a common vision of what Lima students need and deserve, then “success for all” will be not only a slogan, but it will identify the real experience of students at Alfred Lima School.

## ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

### Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School

April 30, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports* (available [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org)). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa Ltd. weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits be conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> edition* (available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org)).

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa Ltd. monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa Ltd.'s monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The routine steps that Catalpa Ltd. completed for this review were:

1. discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
2. daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
3. observation of a portion of the visit
4. discussion with the principal at the end of the visit week regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
5. thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
2. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
3. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that was consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

May 23, 2004

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 12 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, teacher assistants, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2000 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2003 Information Works!*
  - 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
  - 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*school and district report cards*

*Local 1033 Contract Laborers' Agreement Between Providence School Board and Rhode Island Laborers District Council*

*Agreement Between Providence School Board Department of Public Schools, Providence, Rhode Island and Rhode Island Council 94 Providence, Rhode Island School Clerical Employees Local 1339, Affiliate of AFSCME/AFL-CIO*

*Folders:*

*Evaluation of teachers*

*Literacy Frameworks*

*ProvidenceOne Plan guidelines*

*Report Cards*

*Scope and Sequence*

*Technology Plan*

*Stanford 9 information*

*Harassment Policy*

*Disciplinary Codes*

*Administrative Procedures*

*LIFT Manual*

*Alfred Lima Dual Language Self-Study*

## **State Assessment Results for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School**

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

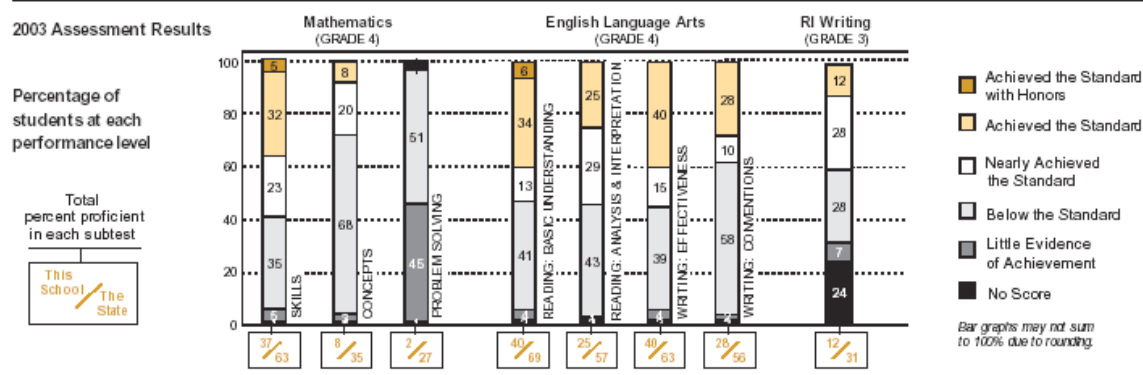
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

### **RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

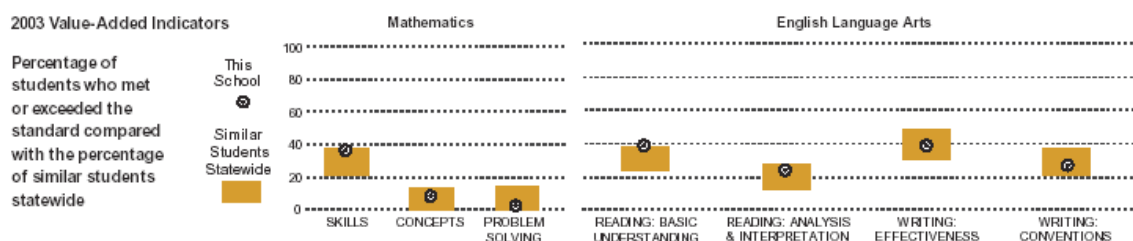
***Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments***



## RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

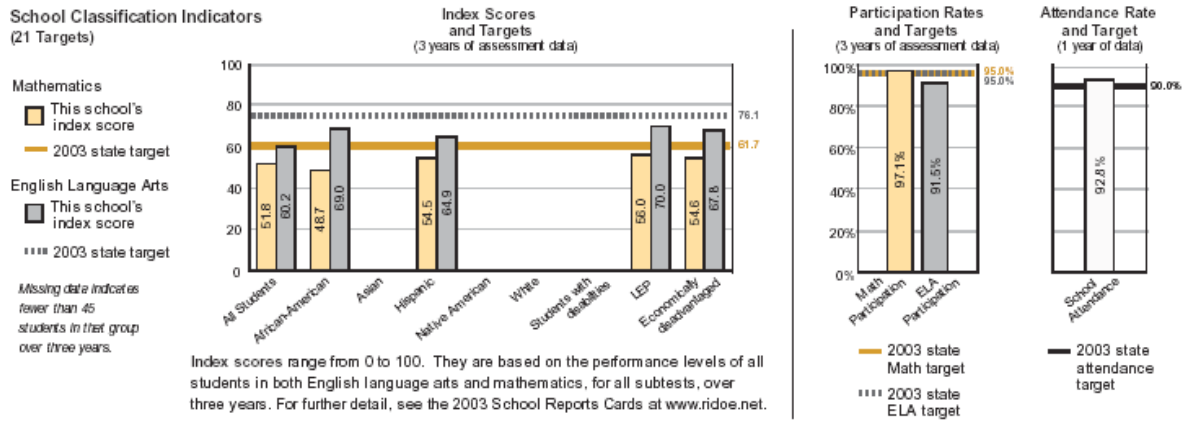
This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

*Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide*



## RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

*Table 3. 2001-2002 Student Results across Subgroups*

### School Report Card

The Alfred Lima Elementary School has been categorized as in need of improvement, insufficient progress on the basis of its assessment results from 2000-2003. The following is the school report card that shows the school's performance in relation to the 2004 annual measurable objectives (AMO).

Information Works! data for Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**THE ALFRED LIMA SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Ellen McAdam  
SIT Chair  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

David Alba  
Assistant Principal

Carmen Antelo  
Third Grade Teacher/Spanish

Joseph Dauray  
Sixth Grade Teacher  
Providence Teachers Union Building Representative

Marta Espinal  
Vice-Parents  
Parents United For Lima

Lori Fitzgerald  
Literacy Coach

Kerry Friel  
Fifth Grade Teacher/English

Matt Garcia  
Parents United For Lima Alternate

Socorro Gomez-Potter  
Principal

Hamlet Lopez  
Special Education Teacher Assistant

Bob Prignano  
Dual Language Coach

Xiomara Rodriquez  
Parents United For Lima  
President

Juan Rosales  
Parents United for Lima Alternate

Corinne Smith  
School Nurse/Health Teacher

Jennifer Walker  
First Grade Teacher/Spanish



**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

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On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
To serve as a SALT Fellow  
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